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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSM-03 SAA-01
CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01
SP-02 SS-15 TRSE-00 OMB-01 ACDA-12 SSO-00 INRE-00
NSCE-00 IO-13 HA-05 MCT-02 COME-00 SY-05 PER-01
/103 W
----------057245 171301Z /44
O P 171221Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8733
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
COMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 3988

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, ASEC, LE
SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION: JULY 17, 1300 HOURS LOCAL

REF: BEIRUT 3958 (DTG 150907Z JUL 78)

1. SUMMARY: IN A SPEECH TO THE NATION ON JULY 15, PRESIDENT
SARKIS WITHDREW HIS THREAT TO RESIGN. WHILE APPLAUDING HIS DE-
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CISION NOT TO RESIGN, POLITICIANS WERE GENERALLY DISAPPOINTED
WITH HIS SPEECH. A SHAKY CEASE-FIRE CONTINUES TO HOLD GENERALLY.
PHALANGE AND NLP FIGHTERS HAVE ENGAGED IN A NUMBER OF GUNBATTLES
OVER THE LAST SEVERAL DAYS. PSP PRESIDENT WALID JUMBLATT AND PPS
HEAD ABDULLAH SA'DAH MET WITH FORMER PRESIDENT SULAYMAN
FRANJIYAH IN ZGHARTA.

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2. SARKIS ADDRESSES THE NATIONA. IN AN ADDRESS TO THE NATION ON JULY 15, PRESIDENT SARKIS WITHDREW HIS THREAT TO RESIGN (SEPTEL). SARKIS SAID THAT VIOLENCE WOULD CONTINUE "AS LONG AS HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE CONTINUE TO POSSESS WEAPONS," AND HE ADMITTED THE LEBANESE MILITIA COULD NOT BE DISARMED IMMEDIATELY. HE CALLED ON THE LEBANESE PEOPLE TO REGARD THE SYRIAN FORCES AS "LEGAL LEBANESE FORCES WHICH ARE TEMPORARILY FILLING IN FOR OUR ARMED FORCES." HE ALSO PROPOSED DEPLOYMENT OF THE ARMY SOUTH AND INSTITUTION OF A COMPULSORY MILITARY SERVICE.

3. REACTION TO PRESIDENT'S SPEECH. INITIAL REACTION TO PRESIDENT'S SPEECH WAS MIXED AT BEST. WHILE APPLAUDING HIS DECISION NOT TO RESIGN, POLITICIANS GENERALLY EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT THAT HE HAD NOT PROPOSED MORE FORCEFUL MEASURES (SEPTEL). FORMER PRIME MINISTER RASHID KARAMI SAID ON JULY 15 THAT "WE HOPE THIS TIME THAT WORDS WILL BE FOLLOWED BY MORE FORCEFUL MEASURES." NLP LEADER CAMILLE CHAMOUN, WHILE STATING THE "WAITING VULTURES" HAD BEEN DECEIVED, ASKED THE PRESIDENT TO EXPLAIN WHY THE SYRIANS WERE LEGAL FORCES.

4. CEASE-FIRE STILL HOLDING.

A. SHAKY CEASE-FIRE CONTINUES TO HOLD GENERALLY, ALTHOUGH SCATTERED SMALL ARMS FIRE AND EXPLOSIONS CONTINUE IN EAST BEIRUT AREA. ACCORDING TO A DOCTOR IN BARBIR HOSPITAL, FIVE TO SIX SYRIAN MILITARY CASUALTIES ARE BROUGHT THERE DAILY FOR TREATMENT. CONFIDENTIAL

NEVERTHELESS, TRAFFIC HAS INCREASED BETWEEN EAST AND WEST BEIRUT, ALTHOUGH IT REMAINS WELL BELOW NORMAL.

B. MINISTER OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS ASAD RIZK ANNOUNCED ON JULY 15 THAT 12,000 FAMILIES HAD FLED EAST BEIRUT. (COMMENT: THE NUMBER IS PROBABLY CONSIDERABLY HIGHER. END COMMENT.) ABOUT 90 PERCENT OF THE EMBASSY LOCAL EMPLOYEES SHOWED UP FOR WORK ON JULY 17.

5. PHALANGE/NLP FIGHT.

A. ACCORDING TO DATT SOURCES, PHALANGE AND NLP FIGHTERS HAVE ENGAGED IN NUMBER OF GUNBATTLES OVER LAST SEVERAL DAYS, PARTICULARLY IN AYN AR-RUMMANEH. NLP SOURCES CLAIM THAT INCIDENTS INITIALLY BEGAN JULY 13 WITH QUARREL OVER DIVISION OF SPOILS LOOTED FROM SHOPS IN AREA, AND THAT THREE NLP WERE KILLED. NLP STRONGMAN IN AYN AR-RUMMANEH, ELIAS HANNASH, THEN REPORTEDLY ROUNDED UP 25 PHALANGE AND HELD THEM HOSTAGE FOR TWO DAYS. (ACCORDING TO A SAUDI ADF OFFICER IN THE AREA, HANNASH ALSO EXECUTED THREE PHALANGE, AND NLP LEADER CAMILLE CHAMOUN REFUSED A REQUEST BY PHALANGISTS TO TURN HANNASH OVER TO THEM.) VARIOUS SOURCES OBSERVED SMALL ARMS FIRE AND EXPLOSIONS IN AYN AR RUMMANEH THROUGHOUT NIGHT OF JULY 16-17, BUT NLP SOURCES TOLD

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TATT THAT INTER-CHRISTIAN FIGHTING ENDED MORNING OF JULY 17.

6. WALID JUMBLATT IN ZGHARTA. ON JULY 15 PSP PRESIDENT WALID JUMBLATT AND PPS HEAD ABDULLAH SA'DAH MET WITH FORMER PRESIDENT SULAYMAN FRANJIYAH IN ZGHARTA ON JULY 15 (NOT IHDIN AS REPORTED BEIRUT 3962). CHRISTIANS FEAR THE THREE MEN ARE ABOUT TO FORM A PRO-SYRIAN POLITICAL ALLIANCE.
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